

Mindful luxury: A case of the Faroe Islands

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the evolving landscape of luxury travel beyond traditional markers such as quality, exclusivity, and cost. As the luxury travel market is projected to reach USD\$2.7 billion by 2032, emerging forms such as community-based, idle, and sustainable luxury challenge conventional norms. This study delves into the evolving landscape of luxury travel through the lens of mindfulness, with the Faroe Islands serving as a captivating case study. The intersection of exclusivity and environmental consciousness in this remote destination introduces the concept of 'mindful luxury.' Analyzing the experiences of 16 tourists, we uncover a profound transformation in luxury travel, blending uniqueness with curiosity, awareness, and contemplation. This mindful approach redefines luxury experiences as not just indulgent but as profoundly transformational, paving the way for sustainable practices in the future.

1. Introduction

The luxury travel market is experiencing significant growth, projected to reach USD \$2.7 billion by 2032 (Globe Newswire, 2023). Traditionally, this sector has been characterized by offering exceptional experiences (Verissimo & Loureiro, 2013), upscale accommodations (Harkison, Hemmington, & Hyde, 2018), and exclusive destinations or activities (Buckley & Mossaz, 2016). However, new perspectives on luxury travel are emerging. For instance, luxury community-based tourism combines experiential and socially responsible tourism within a luxury framework (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2017), while sustainable luxury demonstrates how environmental considerations can enhance the perceived integrity of luxury offerings (Amatulli, De Angelis, & Stoppani, 2021). These developments indicate that luxury tourism can extend beyond its traditional scope, a transition from material ownership to experiential being (Amatulli et al., 2021). Following Peeters, Çakmak, and Guiver (2024), this shift towards experiential luxury opens avenues to integrate sustainability more prominently.

Despite growing research on sustainability, the tourism sector has made limited progress in addressing sustainability challenges (Scott & Gossling, 2021). In this context, luxury travel, often associated with materialism and excess, can be positioned to make a significant impact.

The Faroe Islands serve as a case study, offering a unique combination of exclusivity (Haddingerh, 2020) and a commitment to preserving cultural heritage and ecological integrity (Gaini, 2022). Tourists in the Faroe Islands are encouraged to engage mindfully with their surroundings, minimizing negative impacts and focusing on personal enrichment (Wang, Chen, Shi, & Shi, 2021). This approach positions the Faroe Islands as a model of luxury travel that fosters heightened awareness and attentiveness in visitors. From this standpoint, we investigate the transformative essence of luxury travel through the lived experiences of 16 tourists in the Faroe Islands.

Our study extends the concept of sustainable luxury (Amatulli et al., 2021) by exploring how mindfulness can be a practical approach to addressing sustainability challenges. We examine how traditional luxury characteristics, such as uniqueness, rarity, and scarcity, are enhanced by mindful behaviours including curiosity, awareness, connectivity, and contemplation. This intersection deepens tourists' understanding and connection to environments and culture, with a potential to increase sustainable travel practices in the future. We suggest that this mindful approach redefines luxury experiences as transformational (Llamas & Thomsen, 2016), introducing the concept of 'mindful luxury' to the luxury travel literature.

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2. Theoretical background

2.1. Luxury travel

The luxury market, particularly in tourism, has seen significant growth in recent years (Chang, Ko, & Leite, 2016). Luxury travel is often associated with high quality, uniqueness, exclusivity, and aesthetic appeal (Hung, Ren, & Qiu, 2021). Research typically focuses on the social and personal benefits of luxury travel, such as self-enhancement (Seo, Ko, & Kim, 2021), prestige (Correia & Moital, 2009), brand loyalty (Hwang & Han, 2014), social status (Correia, Kozak, & Kim, 2019), and superior quality (Seo et al., 2021). However, a new perspective views luxury travel as transformative, emphasizing self-identity expression (Janssen, Vanhamme, & Leblanc, 2017), the transformative power of gift-giving (Llamas & Thomsen, 2016), sustainability signalling (Osburg, Yoganathan, McLeay, & Diallo, 2022), and achieving self-transcendence (Von Wallpach, Hemetsberger, Thomsen, & Belk, 2020).

The transformative perspective in luxury tourism highlights the possibility of achieving sustainable outcomes. Yet, the compatibility between luxury and sustainability remains a topic of debate. Traditionally, luxury consumption is viewed as potentially wasteful (Thomsen, Holmqvist, von Wallpach, Hemetsberger, & Belk, 2020). In contrast, recent research indicates that tourists often perceive travel as a transcendent experience that fosters care for local cultures and environments (Chan, 2019). This suggests that destinations known for their stewardship, solitude, and cultural richness can play a vital role in promoting environmental and cultural preservation, thus aligning with sustainability goals.

2.2. Mindful travel

The increasing interest in mindfulness among travellers, characterized by a heightened state of awareness and attentiveness to the present moment (Brown & Ryan, 2003), may offer a pathway to more sustainable travel behaviours. By fostering a deeper sense of contemplation, open curiosity, and conscious awareness, tourists may be more likely to engage in practices that respect and preserve local cultures and environments (Moscardo, 1996).

This mindful approach to travel, as seen in interactions with heritage sites and the interpretation of experiences (Noor et al., 2014), encourages a more thoughtful engagement with destinations (Bozkurt, 2021). Mindful tourists, who disconnect from digital distractions (Stankov, Filimonau, Gretzel, & Vujčić, 2020) and attune themselves to their surroundings (Chan, 2019), are more likely to appreciate the value of sustainable practices, such as supporting local economies and minimizing environmental impact. This conscious engagement not only enriches the travel experience but also promotes behaviours that contribute to the long-term sustainability of the places they visit. Mindfulness in travel can be a powerful tool in fostering responsible tourism, encouraging travellers to make choices that balance their enjoyment with the well-being of the destinations they explore.

2.3. Mindful luxury

Our case study explores the conceptualization of 'mindful luxury' and its potential to foster sustainable practices in tourism. Recent research has started to unravel tourists' subjective perceptions of luxury, focusing on varied experiential values (Iloranta & Komppula, 2022), and luxury as a form of hedonistic escapism (Holmqvist, Ruiz, & Peñaloza, 2020). However, our focus shifts to a more subtle, conscious, and understated form of luxury (Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2010).

The transformative nature of luxury travel aligns well with the principles of mindful travel that emphasize purposeful awareness, curiosity, and attentiveness (Moscardo, 1996). Mindful luxury represents a travel experience where tourists actively engage with their environment, valuing transformative and secluded moments while being fully

present and aware (Taylor & Norman, 2019; Tung, Lin, Qiu Zhang, & Zhao, 2017). This approach has the potential to reshape the traditional luxury travel narrative, fostering sustainable outcomes as tourists become more environmentally and culturally sensitive (Chan, 2019).

2.4. A practice theory approach

This study employs a practice theory framework to examine the evolution of luxury travel into sustainability tourism. By focusing on practices as fundamental units, practice theory illuminates how they shape actions and social order within a cultural context (Reckwitz, 2002). The approach, emphasizing the organization of the practice itself, views it as a social collective, considering training, norms, rules, and precepts during consumption (Dolan, Seo, & Kemper, 2019).

Conceptualizations within practice theory suggest that practices involve configuring symbols, meaning, and materials for individuals to perform specific social actions (Cruz, Seo, & Rex, 2018). Exploring practices-as-performances, the framework provides insight into diverse forms of luxury travel and identifies their contribution to mindfulness (Lamers, Van der Duim, & Spaargaren, 2017). The focus on units of practice, collective body, and mental routines underscores the socially routinized nature of mental activities. Our analysis centres on the assemblages of luxury travel practices, revealing skills acquired through training, such as selecting luxurious destinations and managing finances for flights and accommodations. Adopting a practice theory approach has important implications for understanding luxury tourism comprehensively, exploring the connection between luxury travel practices, mindfulness, and sustainability through an analysis of tourists' actions before, during, and after the trip (Lamers et al., 2017).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research context

The Faroe Islands are an archipelago of 18 islands located in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean. The islands have approximately 52,000 inhabitants who have actively preserved their cultural and linguistic heritage through folklore, cultural events, and a self-ruled government (Hayfield & Schug, 2019). Until recently, the archipelago was not a well-developed tourist destination. However, in 2012 the government decided to reorganise the tourism industry and funded 16.7 million DKK to the agency Visit Faroe Islands, with the objective of doubling tourist influx by 2020 (Hvidtfeldt, 2014). In 2013, Visit Faroe Islands began re-branding the archipelago as 'unspoiled' – 'unexplored' – 'unbelievable' (<https://www.visitfaroeislands.com/about/quick-facts/>), given their unique culture and natural beauty (Brown & Cave, 2010; Haddington, 2020).

Despite recent branding efforts, the Faroe Islands remain remote with limited access by airline (Atlantic Airways and SAS) or ferry (Smyril Line) (Ankre & Nilsson, 2016). These transportation options, though expanding beyond Scandinavian destinations, attract mainly upper-middle-class tourists, maintaining an exclusive appeal (Ankre & Nilsson, 2016). The hospitality sector reflects such exclusivity, with high prices ranging between US\$200 and US\$300 per night due to limited hotel availability during peak seasons. The assignment of 2 Michelin stars to the gastronomic restaurant KOKS has further enhanced the islands' popularity, offering innovative Nordic cuisine at a price of US \$500 per meal (Ankre & Nilsson, 2016). Consequently, the Faroe Islands positioned itself as an exclusive and luxurious destination, as reflected in marketing strategies and campaigns geared towards encouraging stewardship of the culture and environment and connecting tourists with locals.

3.2. Data collection

This study uses an interpretivist approach to investigate the

subjective meanings and understanding of consumers (Spiggle, 1994). We deemed a qualitative approach appropriate given the exploratory nature of the topic (Creswell & Poth, 2017) and the lack of investigation into tourism practices at the intersection of luxury, mindfulness and sustainability. Furthermore, we embrace a hermeneutic approach, transcending mere descriptions of tourists' experiences by delving into the interpretations and significance they attribute to these experiences of engaging in touristic practices (Reiners, 2012). This interpretive facet entails a thorough examination of individuals' 'lived' experiences and their heightened awareness of these encounters in their everyday practices (Laverty, 2003). In the context of tourism studies, in-depth semi-structured interviews serve as a preferred method for data collection when applying a hermeneutical framework (e.g., Wassler & Kirillova, 2019).

The first author conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with luxury tourists who had recently visited the Faroe Islands. Informants were between 23 and 52 years of age and were selected using two criteria: (1) they had chosen to visit the Faroe Islands for a luxury travel experience, and either stayed in a luxury hotel and/or dined in a Michelin star restaurant while visiting, and (2) they had visited the Faroe Islands at least once within the last two years (see Table 1). We used snowballing technique (Patton, 2002) as a sampling strategy to recruit respondents through social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Instagram) and online blogs. We collected the data from August to December 2020 and conducted interviews remotely via platforms such as FaceTime, Instagram, Skype, and WhatsApp. Interviews were conducted in English and lasted between 30 and 90 min. Data collection ended when saturation was reached, and no new topics emerged from the interviews (McCracken, 1988).

Interviews included grand-tour questions on informants' experiences with travelling to initiate conversation and better understand their backgrounds (McCracken, 1988). The interviews also focused on topics such as their personal experience in 'doing tourism' in the Faroe Islands. Moreover, as this study's original theoretical lens was on luxury travelling, questions also included why they chose to visit the islands, how they prepared for their trip, what they did during their trip, and how they compared it with other luxury places they have visited. We encouraged informants to look at pictures they took during their trip to prompt them to elaborate more on their experiences. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to address any issues related to credibility (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

3.3. Data analysis

We analysed the interviews through the concept of the 'hermeneutic circle', signifying that the researcher's understanding of the investigated phenomenon undergoes an iterative development, with the initial framework shaping comprehension (Thompson, 1997). To achieve this, we established connections between individual elements of practices and the overall context, such as relating a sentence to a paragraph or an individual transcript to all 16 transcripts. The data were then uploaded and coded in NVivo 12 software.

During the process of analysis, we tackled issues related to trustworthiness through regular researcher meetings to explore divergence in perspectives and enrich the theorization (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Researcher reflexivity was enhanced by the researchers' various levels of engagement with the context (e.g., one of the authors has frequently visited Faroe Islands; another has visited there once; the others did not have such experiences and were not familiar with the context until starting this research project). This process of immersion and iteration led us to our present theorization of mindful luxury travel. Finally, to ensure the interpretation remained authentic and well-supported, the first author revisited the 16 participants to confirm that our interpretations matched their original intent regarding their tourism perceptions, to avoid baseless assertions.

4. Findings

Throughout the interviews, participants articulated a substantial shift in their understanding of luxury travel practices. Their narratives revealed a marked contrast between experiences in traditional luxury destinations—characterized by pampering and relaxation—and their journeys to the Faroe Islands, where a distinct form of luxury practice unfolded. This novel perspective underscored the significance of engaging with life's fundamental elements, such as nature, culture, and connections with people, as integral components of a luxurious travel practice (Sheth, Sethia, & Srinivas, 2011). The shift identified signalled a departure from conventional luxury towards a more profound, meaningful, and 'unconventional' luxury practice, rejuvenating appreciation for life and personal growth. This evolution highlighted a contemporary preference for authenticity and cultural immersion in modern luxury travel practices (Thomsen et al., 2020). As one participant shared:

I work 60 hours a week and live in a capital city. As you can imagine, all my adult life I have been going to luxury destinations such as the Maldives or Bora Bora, where you know you can lay on a sandy beach and you get

Table 1
Participant information.

| Respondent no. | Gender | Age | Nationality | Country of current residence | Occupation | Travel companions | Luxury element | Length of visit (days) |
|----------------|--------|-----|--------------------|------------------------------|--|-------------------|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Female | 37 | US | US | Marketer | 1 | Michelin star restaurant | 10 |
| 2 | Female | 27 | Belgian | Belgium | Physiotherapist | 0 | High-end hotel | 4 |
| 3 | Female | 27 | Spanish and German | Spain | Digital marketer | 3 | High-end hotel/Michelin star restaurant | 4 |
| 4 | Male | 23 | German | Germany | Operations manager for a private equity fund | 1 | High-end hotel | 9 |
| 5 | Female | 52 | American | US | Educator | 0 | Michelin star restaurant | 7 |
| 6 | Female | 30 | Romanian | Denmark | Product marketing manager | 1 | High-end hotel | 14 |
| 7 | Female | 46 | British | United Kingdom | Writer | 0 | High-end hotel/Michelin star restaurant | 7 |
| 8 | Male | 32 | French | France | Photographer and video maker | 1 | Michelin star restaurant | 7 |
| 9 | Female | 32 | French | Denmark | Doctoral student | 1 | High-end hotel | 10 |
| 10 | Female | 23 | Spanish | Spain | E-commerce Intern | 1 | Michelin star restaurant | 7 |
| 11 | Female | 39 | American | US | Real estate executive | 0 | High-end hotel | 4 |
| 12 | Female | 31 | Bulgarian | Bulgaria | Project assistant | 1 | High-end hotel | 10 |
| 13 | Female | 27 | American | Denmark | IT product owner | 0 | High-end hotel | 5 |
| 14 | Female | 29 | Lithuanian | Denmark | Hospitality, floor manager | 2 | Michelin star restaurant | 3 |
| 15 | Male | 30 | Brazilian | Brazil | Product manager | 1 | High-end hotel/Michelin star restaurant | 10 |
| 16 | Male | 30 | British | Denmark | Management consultant | 1 | Michelin star restaurant | 9 |

served 24/7. That to me was luxury travelling. But my point of view kind of completely changed after I went to the Faroe Islands. I kind of realised that the 'typical' luxury destination that I was talking about actually makes you want to laze around, to numb yourself from your current life, you don't do anything, you don't think about anything. You don't talk to anyone. (Informant 11)

Another participant expressed a transformative shift, stating:

Going to the Faroe Islands showed me what luxury is really about: it's about appreciating the little things, the essential things really of your life. I am thinking nature, people, connections, ancestry, food, culture. You don't get that when you have a hectic lifestyle – you don't have time, you don't have the energy to appreciate these things. I mean, it really made me appreciate life again All these elements for me equate to a true form of luxury travelling experience and I don't think I can go back to the good old luxury resort situation. I need to feel alive. (Informant 4)

These participant narratives underscored a transition in luxury travel practices, moving beyond lavishness and 24/7 resort service. Such reflections illustrate a shift towards practices deeply rooted in mindfulness—a departure from mere indulgence to a mindful immersion in the present moment. This perspective resonates with features of mindful travel, emphasizing conscious awareness, presence, and genuine appreciation (Wang et al., 2021). Consequently, luxury travel practices are reconceptualized as embracing a holistic engagement with the world, highlighting the intertwined nature of luxury and mindfulness in contemporary travel practices.

In adopting this new perspective of luxury travel practices, the study identified four atypical luxury travel practices—hoarding, savouring, reconnecting, and secluding. Fig. 1 visually represents the interrelation of these practices, forming transformative mindful moments within the broader framework of contemporary luxury travel practices. These atypical practices will be elaborated and detailed in the following sections, providing a nuanced understanding of their role in reshaping the landscape of modern luxury travel experiences.

4.1. Hoarding

We define *hoarding* as an atypical luxury travel practice of conscious knowledge-accumulation, cataloguing, and incorporating information

from the luxury destination. In this practice, tourists engage in anticipatory actions, strategically planning to enable their participation in the upcoming luxury travel endeavour, a practice common for aspiring luxury consumers (Srivastava, Mukherjee, & Jebarajakirthy, 2020).

This atypical luxury travel practice entails more than just financial planning. Indeed, hoarding also occurs through the accumulation, curation, and meticulous planning of the luxury trip:

I spent so much time online, just checking out the pictures and really trying to imagine how it would be to be there. And it just looked completely out of the ordinary. I mean, the landscapes are so dramatic, and you never [see] anyone in the pictures and it looks so remote. And yeah, so I just really started fantasising on it. And then I started reading a lot of blogs, I accidentally met a few people who had been there who told me that they loved it. So I really checked that out and then I read about how it's difficult to move around the Faroe Islands. And so I started really planning it out, because I just went there for a week and a half. And I didn't know how long it would take me to do certain things I started to pinpoint all the areas I wanted to go to. And kind of schedule like if I need to take a boat tour or whatnot. I started reading a lot about the culture and the history I also watched a YouTube documentary on the Faroe Islands to really get a sense of how it looks. Who are the people?.. Why is it so special? (Informant 16)

In this example, the tourist not only *hoards* information through different media (e.g. blogs, websites, social media) but also daydreams about the luxury destination. Thus, the atypical luxury travel practice of hoarding fuels consumer desire (Belk, Ger, & Askegaard, 2003), similar to the quality of the experience of mindful travel that evokes curiosity. Mindful travel sparks an interest in learning and reflecting about host environments (Moscardo, 1996) to enhance the experience (Taylor & Norman, 2019), much like the experience in luxury travel consumption in which the tourist accumulates and catalogues information from the luxury destination. Knowledge-seeking and cataloguing allows tourists to anticipate how they will interact with the host environment on arrival.

Notably, mindful luxury goes beyond collecting information on up-scale destinations; it includes particular knowledge-seeking that enables respect for nature and local communities, which are quintessential aspects of sustainable tourism practices (Prayag, Aquino, Hall, Chen, & Fieger, 2022). This approach is exemplified by a traveler's comment about seeking a deep understanding of their destination before arriving:

I actually went to the library to check out some history books on the Faroe Islands. The whole place is so remote, unspoiled ... I really wanted to get it right. I wanted to understand what kind of nature and environment there is ... who is the local community. To understand their customs and be very respectful of the environment. For the trouble and price of going there, I really didn't want to be one of those mindless tourists who don't know and care about the place they are travelling to. (Informant 3)

This quote illustrates how mindful travellers educate themselves about the destination's history, environment, local community, and customs, with the aim of being respectful and environmentally conscious. Because such experiences were previously discussed to be important aspects that orient travellers to become more sustainable toward tourism (Prayag et al., 2022), hoarding connects mindful travel with sustainable tourism.

At the intersection of the atypical luxury practice of *hoarding* and mindful travel, curiosity serves as a common foundation that encourages respect for the environment. Informants' meticulous planning reveals that hoarding goes beyond simple material collection to a thorough gathering of knowledge and anticipation, akin to the curiosity at the heart of mindful travel. Such careful planning – and excitement for discovery – showcases mindfulness, as tourists deeply connect with their surroundings. Thus, the practice of hoarding in luxury travel, paired with mindful travel's inherent curiosity, merges to offer a unique, respectful, and environmentally-aware sustainable luxury experience.

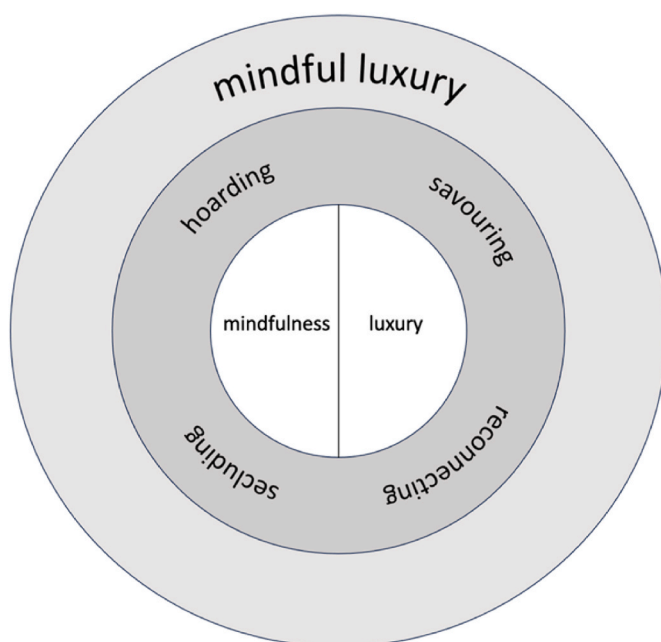


Fig. 1. Transformative experiences of mindful luxury.

4.2. Savouring

Through the atypical luxury travel practice of *savouring*, tourists spend a considerable amount of time eating (in high-end restaurants), resting (in high-end accommodations), and taking the time to appreciate that specific experience. When *savouring*, tourists are aware of the cultural, communal, and sensory experience around them. For example, going to a high-end restaurant is expensive; yet tourists go there to partake in the practice of savouring the luxurious environment, which includes, beyond the food, its service, décor, and atmosphere. This means that luxury tourists consciously adopt timelessness as a way to appreciate sensory experiences as a whole. As Informant 15 said:

I think that the entire experience from the entrance of the restaurant, meticulously tasting all those plates until the desserts arrive, or even the wine or some alcoholic beverage And when we look at the prices, you know, it's like ... way beyond your imagination, especially compared to some restaurants here in Brazil. And it's not like we worried about the price, of course, but we focused really on the entire experience, you know, from what you have in the beginning to the end.

Other luxury tourists actively enjoy savouring at high-end restaurants not only for the sensory experience but also for the communal aspect of it. Thus, although eating is an important factor in the atypical luxury travel practice of savouring, conversing with others is also important, as Informant 5 noted:

The thing that was nice about that restaurant is they have a community table. And so that night, there were eight of us at this community table and it was great.

In line with eating and conversing, spending time at high-end restaurants also entails a cultural experience, which heightens the atypical luxury travel practice of savouring. For example:

Going to KOKS was by far an extraordinary luxury experience. The food is a given. But what was absolutely breathtaking was the location of the restaurant and the way food was announced for each meal. The restaurant is located in the middle of nowhere, the landscape is ... completely untouched and beautiful. You start with canapés in an old fermentation hut, and the waiters explain the traditions related to fermentation there. You then take a jeep trip and end up in the restaurant, which is essentially an old traditional wooden house, which not only looks authentic but also has a lot of history and a lot of traditional art displayed throughout. I have been to a lot of luxury restaurants, but they are always in very modern buildings, with often no history or cultural background. Being in that kind of environment really made me appreciate everything around me.

In this manner, the conscious awareness of practices representing the pinnacle of luxury, such as partaking in a high-end restaurant dining experience, empowers tourists to immerse themselves fully in their encounters of the present moment. The act of dining transcends temporal constraints, evolving into a timeless event. Each of these peak experiences provides tourists with an intensified mindful engagement (Tung et al., 2017).

The practice of *savouring* during luxury travel experiences not only aligns with mindfulness but also promotes sustainable practices by fostering a deep appreciation for authenticity and locality of culture:

When I'm in the Faroes, I want to eat some food that's kind of local. It's like some sort of authentic kind of upgraded home food. Like what your grandma would make but made by a Michelin star person. And you take your time to really appreciate and eat the food, the history of the Faroese food, the local produce, and all the challenges that locals encounter in preserving their centuries old authentic cuisine. (Informant 1)

This sentiment reflects a desire to engage with the rich history of Faroese cuisine and the challenges faced by locals in preserving their authentic culinary heritage. By taking the time to appreciate and savour these local dishes, travellers not only support sustainable practices

within the hospitality industry but also contribute to the preservation of cultural traditions and the promotion of responsible tourism.

The atypical practice of *savouring*—indulging in gourmet dishes, appreciating upscale ambiances, and participating in communal conversations and cultural nuances—emphasizes deep presence, fully cherishing the present experience. An alignment emerges between savouring's immersive luxurious indulgence and the conscious awareness integral to mindful travel. This convergence transforms encounters into sustainability contemplations, marked by heightened awareness and enriched appreciation of local culture.

4.3. Reconnecting

The atypical luxury travel practice of *reconnecting* unfolds as tourists strive to disengage from urbanized and accelerated environments. This practice manifests through embodied, technological, or episodic elements (Husemann & Eckhardt, 2019), crucial for tourists seeking to decelerate from their fast-paced routines and re-establish a connection with their surroundings. For instance, tourists enact reconnecting through embodied activities like walking or hiking, opting for physically demanding experiences over more comfortable transportation modes such as buses or trains:

We quickly realised that the only way to get around in the Faroes is by car, but cars can only drive you so far We were a bit surprised at first but we actually really loved that we had to walk and hike. The luxury trips I used to go to often offered planned trips, where a bus or a chauffeur would drop you at a given place, and you would then drive back to the hotel. In the Faroes, that's just not the case. But even though hiking on really steep and narrow cliffs was challenging, and sometimes painful, it really prompted this willingness [to] actually reconnect with nature, to explore this unspoiled land, to feel your body again, to feel alive again. (Informant 3)

Reconnecting can also be technological, in that tourists have a reduced and more controlled phone usage that is primarily utilitarian (e.g. GPS, emergency calls only):

I mean ... you don't use your phone, and everything is slow, because you're hiking, you're doing all these physical activities. And you really want to sink in, into the environment. And as I said, this is rare, so it's worth it. And you're not just there to tick a box So you really, you take a breather ... and you slowdown in time. You get up early, sometimes, you know, you're in the now. (Informant 16)

Alternately, reconnecting is episodic, as tourists engage in isolated activities that enable physical presence and an appreciation of how environments support historical stories and features of a local destination:

It was inaccessible. It was rare I was, you know, connected to nature, and that is something I can deal with. In a city, I can't connect to nature. Yes, I can go to the countryside and all that. But often countryside [is] still urbanised in some way or another. And this is kind of going back to the roots [It] is so special that for me it's luxurious to be able to do that. And yeah, to be able to ... be tranquil and to be relaxed and mindful, and all that, I really, really appreciate that. (Informant 10)

We went on different excursions, and we were completely submerged in each excursion, not just because of the beautiful scenery but also because our tour guides and even locals that we met on the way would stop and tell us all these mystical folklores. And most of their folklore is based on mythology, and on the nature that surrounds us. And if you really want to understand these tales, you really need to be soaking in the environment. (Informant 14)

The practice of reconnecting to nature, history, others, and oneself, emerges as a mindful experience of feeling connected to other beings and environments, which motivated some participants to become local

stewards of their surroundings. As informant 5 remarked:

It's so clean and you're so connected to nature that I never saw a single piece of trash in the Faroe Islands. The whole time we were hiking, we kept all our trash in our backpacks. I'm kind of ashamed to admit that if the Faroes were one of those cheap, overcrowded places like say Greece – I think I would have probably thrown trash without even thinking about it.

This observation underscores how the pristine natural environment of the Faroe Islands prompts visitors to be more mindful of their surroundings and adopt sustainable practices such as proper waste disposal – which they might not have adopted otherwise. Moreover, informant 13's reflection highlights an alternative aspect of how reconnection serves memorable experiences, prompting thoughtfulness of purchasing:

I actually didn't feel like buying souvenirs. Because the souvenir of going there is actually keeping in your mind the memory of the place ... but not products per se. But I feel like when I'm in another city, and it's super hectic and all that, it feels like you overcompensate, and you try to buy stuff. So in a way I felt less materialistic, I felt more in tune with the experience.

This sentiment reflects a conscious effort to avoid overconsumption and prioritize meaningful experiences that enable connection, over material possessions. In contrast to the consumerist mindset often associated with luxury travel, the tranquil setting of the Faroe Islands encourages travelers to appreciate the inherent beauty of the destination without feeling the need to accumulate material goods.

Reconnecting draws tourists from urban bustle to immerse in host environments, fostering non-attachment to material luxuries and fast-paced lifestyles (Husemann & Eckhardt, 2019). This mindset shift encourages embracing new forms of reconnection through physical activities, serving as pathways to mindfulness and appreciation for non-material luxuries. By distancing from accelerated environments and minimizing digital device usage (Stankov et al., 2020), tourists engage deeper with their surroundings, finding luxury in the absence of digital distractions. Activities like hiking promote a mindful connection with nature, reducing materialism and enhancing environmental appreciation. This enriched travel experience not only deepens connections with places and people but also motivates tourists to act as stewards of sustainability.

4.4. Secluding

By travelling to luxury destinations, tourists engage in the atypical luxury travel practice of *secluding*. Tourists engage in this when they actively find ways to be physically and mentally alone. As some of the respondents explained, visiting remote luxury destinations such as the Faroe Islands allows them to isolate themselves from crowds and truly be alone:

I think for somewhere like the Faroe Islands, there's a different version of luxury, isn't there? Which isn't a house on stilts in the Maldives; it's actually having that isolation, having a relatively small [number] of tourists. You've gone somewhere that is not that commonly visited. (Informant 11)

Moreover, some tourists live in urban and mundane environments in which their daily routines are shaped by the market and thus are often out of their control. Therefore, going to a remote, luxurious destination and being alone also gives tourists a means to re-take ownership of the environment that surrounds them, as illustrated by this informant:

It was just nice to be in kind of solitude. And to be on, like, an amazing hike and not pass anybody else. I mean, you feel alone in the world Like, maybe no one's ever been here before. How cool would that be, you know, if there are parts of the US that you go, where you can imagine what it would have been like to be a Native American or a first explorer or

something like that, because you can look forever and not see anything or anyone. There's just so few places like that ... anymore. (Informant 1)

Hence, through the practice of *secluding*, tourists can reclaim authority over their surroundings, shape their own narratives, and cultivate a sense of individuality. Mindfully approaching individual experiences empowers luxury travelers to perceive destination environments in a distinct light. Surrounded by environments where interactions and urbanization are scarce, tourists see the host environment as dynamic and evolving (Mick, 2017). This recognition of isolation propels them to seek secluded and solitary experiences while reflecting on the environment (Moscardo, 1996).

The practice of *secluding* further prioritizes tourists to avoid overcrowded tourist areas. As informant 5 expressed:

I really enjoy visiting places where I am the only tourist there, or I don't feel like there's a lot of tourists around me. And I just feel like in Iceland, there's a lot of people who go there now. And they go to the Blue Lagoon, for example. And I just imagine you're surrounded by tourists who are loud and destroying the environment. And it just doesn't feel right. I did everything I could to avoid going to over-crowded places or engaging in over-crowded activities.

The traveler's reluctance to visit overcrowded tourist spots reflects a commitment to reducing the strain that tourism places on fragile ecosystems. Opting for secluded destinations and bypassing popular attractions helps mitigate issues such as noise pollution and environmental degradation stemming from overcrowding. This conscious choice not only enhances the travel experience with moments of solitude and introspection but also contributes to the lasting preservation of natural and cultural sites.

Seeking seclusion in luxury destinations such as the Faroe Islands fosters a deeper connection with nature and culture, reducing ecological footprints while promoting responsible tourism. This deliberate isolation offers a unique form of luxury, offering respite from urban routines and empowering travelers to positively influence their surroundings. Immersing in unspoiled settings encourages mindfulness, prompting travelers to reflect on the transient nature of their surroundings and the wider world. This approach not only facilitates a meaningful retreat but also underscores the importance of conserving these pristine environments for future generations.

5. Discussion

In our discussion, we synthesize the findings from our case study of luxury travel in the Faroe Islands, highlighting the intersection of luxury with mindfulness. Our study revealed four distinct practices: hoarding, savouring, reconnecting, and secluding. These practices suggest a reimagined understanding of luxury tourism that may have a transformative influence on sustainable luxury travel.

The practice of *hoarding* in luxury travel, going beyond financial means to encompass thorough preparation and anticipation, nurtures a mindful curiosity among tourists, enhancing their journey by deepening their appreciation of the destination's cultural and environmental facets. This informed approach may prompt travellers to prioritize sustainable choices in subsequent trips, thus safeguarding the distinctiveness of visited locales. Similarly, in upscale dining establishments, *savouring* transcends mere gastronomic indulgence to encompass an immersive appreciation of the setting's ambiance and cultural nuances. This mindful engagement fosters a heightened respect for local cultures and sustainable practices, potentially influencing tourists to seek out authentic and eco-conscious dining experiences in the future. Furthermore, *reconnecting* with nature and oneself through activities such as hiking and digital detox during luxury travel cultivates a profound reverence for the natural world, motivating tourists to advocate for conservation and responsible travel practices, thereby reducing their ecological footprint in future journeys. Finally, *secluding* oneself in

unique environments like the Faroe Islands, where the emphasis is on rare and introspective experiences, embodies the mindfulness principle of recognizing transience and cherishing uniqueness, potentially prompting tourists to prioritize sustainable and culturally respectful travel options that uphold the integrity of such destinations.

Overall, these experiences have the potential to influence tourists' future travel behaviours, steering them towards more sustainable and responsible travel choices, contributing positively to the preservation of cultural and natural resources in the destinations they visit. This research contributes to sustainable luxury by showing that luxury tourism, often synonymous with extravagance (Correia et al., 2019), can stimulate mindfulness's contrasting principles. Mindfulness often leans towards goals opposing self-enhancement, such as self-transcendence (Brown & Ryan, 2003). We thus extend sustainable luxury to encompass a profound awareness of oneself and the environment, reflecting a transformative essence. Our research reveals that luxury consumption in the Faroe Islands links tourists with the local land and its inhabitants. This interaction promotes mindfulness, rendering luxury consumption more introspective, which may influence outwards behaviours of how tourists interact with local environments.

These insights have implications for both tourists and tourism marketers. For tourists, mindful luxury represents a deep connection with the experience rather than merely with expensive or exclusive aspects characteristic of traditional luxury. Its essence lies in tourists' innate desire to undergo a mindful luxury experience, rather than the sheer ability to afford it. This perspective widens the horizons for tourism operators and managers aiming to engage a broader tourist demographic. The rise of consumer demand for 'quiet luxury' (Han et al., 2010) offers a unique opportunity for tourism destinations sharing similar characteristics to the Faroe Islands to focus on the introspective nature of the tourism experience.

This study has limitations as well. While we are confident in the generalizability of our findings, future research could include diverse tourist experiences within other micro-societal settings to corroborate our findings. Furthermore, our conceptualization of mindful luxury stems from a qualitative study, emphasizing the need for future investigations to empirically scrutinise the framework and affirm the validity of our findings. Finally, future studies might explore whether different generations exhibit varied levels of receptiveness to mindfulness in luxury travel contexts, especially given younger generations' focus on sustainable travel (Prayag et al., 2022).

Impact statement

This research contributes to ongoing debates on the future of tourism in a post-covid world. The Covid19 pandemic has highlighted how overcrowded tourism hotspot can benefit from a reduction or absence of mass tourism. We show that luxury tourism can result in tourists becoming more mindful about the locations they are visiting. The implications of this work for the tourism industry include promoting the luxuriousness of destinations to prime tourists to slow down and be more mindful when visiting places. Destination and place marketers will be able to draw from the four practices of luxury tourism – hoarding, savouring, reconnecting, and secluding – to design campaigns that invite tourists to slow down and be more mindful about the environments they are visiting. This, in turn, can result in more economically and environmentally friendly behaviours, as well as a fuller, richer, overall tourism experience.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Marina Leban: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Amy Errmann:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Yuri Seo:** Writing – review & editing, Writing –

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Declaration of competing interest

None.

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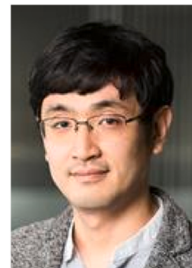
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